Technology Report “Cyber Ethics”

Cyber ethics is an issue that should be a major concern for school districts. It has become a must need in our technological age to properly inform and educate our students on what cyber ethics is and why it is important. My purpose is to better inform you of what cyber ethics are about, how it relates to technology, and why the classroom teacher needs to be aware of it.

The definition of cyber ethics is the ethics applied to the online environment. This simply means the way we conduct ourselves while being apart of the online experience should be in an appropriate manner. The Computer Ethics institute lists examples or “commandments “ that individuals should go by when using a computer. A list of all ten commandments may be found by accessing the following website <http://cpsr.org/issues/ethics/cei/>. A few examples of these commandments are, “thou shalt not use a computer to harm other people, thou shalt not use a computer to copy or use software for which you have not paid, and thou shalt not appropriate other people’s intellectual output.” (Computer Ethics Institute) These are but a few examples of what is considered to be a misuse of technology and a majority of our students are misusing technology on a weekly if not daily basis by simply downloading music, video games, or smart phone applications without paying for them. Our students need to know this is wrong, and not an ethical way to conduct themselves when using technology.

Cyber ethics relates to technology by being an integral component of technology. Technology is like any other institution. If don’t set, create, and instill boundaries then there will be chaos. Students and teachers need to be made aware of how misuse of technology can get them into trouble. If either party isn’t made aware of ethical behavior when using technology then an inappropriate action could happen as a result. It is important to determine what teachers and students may use technology for when they are online. A few examples of ethical violations of teachers are “blogging about working conditions, bashing a principal, organizing a strike, or complaining about students, parents, or board members,” (Shipley). These ethical violations can result in a number of unpleasant consequences for the teacher such as, disciplinary action taken or even dismissal from employment. Students on the other hand can violate cyber ethics by posting inappropriate comments about another student or teacher, posting video or text, or bullying another student while online. These violations can result in many varying consequences to the student and his/her parents as well.

Where does the idea of right and wrong begin online if we don’t establish it? Our students need to understand that anything they access, search, find, or produce should be used in a proper manner. This manner must stay within the realm of ethical behavior. We instruct students to behave and act ethically, but we also must teach them to have the same mindset towards technology. In an article titled, *Discussing cyber ethics with our students is crucial*, author Robert Kruger states, ”Teachers cannot always depend on parents to instill cyber ethics: Parents may not know or follow the rules either.” As educators we must attempt to be one step ahead at all times. We need more professional development courses offered about technological advances, ethical use of technology, and prevention of the misuse of technology by our students. The classroom teacher is the first line of defense on many subjects including the ethical use of technology. Which is why it is crucial to inform all teachers on what school districts want the students to know about cyber ethics while they are online at home or school.

Technology can and will be an exceptional tool to help our world grow, but we must proceed with boundaries and rules in order to keep a grasp on what is ethically right and wrong. We must take responsibility for what is online and what we put online for the future of our students and our society to grow in a positive direction.

References:

Kruger, R. (2003). Discussing Cyber Ethics with Students Is Critical

Shipley, G. (2008). Cyber Ethics- From policy to practice

Allen, S. (2008). The Ten Commandments of Computer Ethics- The Computer Ethics institute <http://cpsr.org/issues/ethics/cei/>